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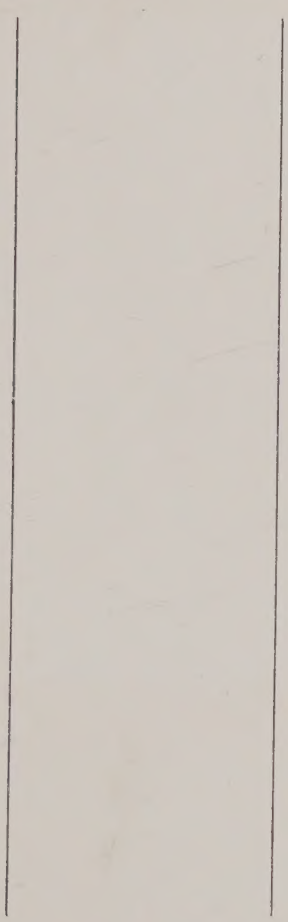

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THE DEATH OF ORPHEUS

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THE
DEATH OF ORPHEUS

BY

LAURENCE HOUSMAN

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ORPHEUS.

DION (*A Shepherd King*).

LYCUS, PHILEMON } (*His Sons*).

LEADER OF CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

EURYDICE (*A Water-Nymph*).

PHALISSA (*Daughter-in-law to Dion*).

FIRST BACCHANAL.

SECOND BACCHANAL.

SHEPHERD BOY.

Shepherds, Maidens, Bacchanals, Shades.

THE DEATH OF ORPHEUS

ACT I

SCENE.—*A deep glen, shaded by trees, with path leading to a stream. The stream is fed by a fall of water from a deeply-recessed rock. Behind the rock rises the mound of a hill crowned by a circle of pine-trees. It is noon: the bright light of day is tempered by the thick screen of leaves. Upon the grass slopes, between which the stream runs,* SHEPHERDS *are discovered resting.*

DION. Deep-fountained Rock, where amid murmurous shade
Of sweet-voiced waters dwells the secret Nymph,
Unseen of men ; and Thou, protecting Pan,
Who unto earth giv'st peace—lover of herds
And all wild things, Father of fleece and fell—
Shadow our noontide rest ! For now the plains
And the bare hill burn in the eye of day ;
All life grows languid, and the parched herbs faint.
Go, fetch me a draught of water from the spring !

[LYCUS *goes : fills a pitcher at the fountain, and returns.* PHILEMON *plays softly upon a small harp.*

Under the heart of Earth,

In the faithful breast,
Surely abideth rest
For the sons of men :
For of her spring rivers to birth,
And the kindly yield
Of herb, and flower, and grass,
And hidden root,—and the joy of the harvest field.
The rains lie buried : they pass ;
They return again.

[*He drinks and passes the pitcher on.*

Take strength, O my sons, from these ;
And to Earth be praise,
Who bringeth to all things life.
So length of days
And peace in the fold shall be ours,

[PHILEMON'S *harping stops.*

And an end without strife.

PHILEMON. Ah ! Father, what hast thou said ?
Was peace in the fold when Linus, our lover, lay dead ?
Linus, a keeper of sheep, and the son of a king !

DION. Peace, and let be ! Shall an old grief trouble thee still ?

PHILEMON. It is new ; it is new ! His voice is gone from the hill :
I shall hear him never again !

[*He resumes his harping.*

MAIDENS *enter, bearing pitchers ; they move slowly down to the spring, and stand to listen.*

Linus is dead, is dead !

1ST SEMI-CHORUS. He sang a song that was loved of men,—
Merry it was as the song of a bird ;
And the feet danced then
For the heart that heard.

2ND SEMI-CHORUS. But the God was jealous because of this—
That he gave unto mortal man more bliss
Than ever befell by the will of Heaven.

[*The harping ceases.*

PHILEMON. And we saw the field with his blood stained red.
Linus, our lover, is dead, is dead !

[*The women stoop to draw water.*

DION. Hearken, my son ; give ear to the voice of age.
Blame not the Gods ; for with them from of old
Dwells wisdom, and the eye of Heaven sees all.
Earth hath her seasons ; so, in its day, comes joy,
Briefer than any flower. Then, for a while,
Man's heart is blest. But Time takes all things fair,
And changing, cherisheth,—making memory sweet.

Enter PHALISSA, *dressed in robes of red and purple, and crowned with vine leaves. She carries a cup and wine-skin. Unseen by the* SHEPHERDS *she comes to the stream, and stands listening.*

PHILEMON. Linus is dead !

DION. Aye, dead. So has this land
Become his resting-place. When shepherds pipe
And maidens dance, his sound is in the hills;
Swift at his call to fold the flocks return;
So in men's hearts his melodies abide,
Vocal for ever. Thus from life's furrowed field
The sown goes reaped, and treasured loss brings gain.
When thou art old thou shalt look back and see
Across the years—as over a sunset land
Of low-lit peaks touched by the downward day—
Those shining joys once thine,—distant, and few,
And far between; and all the rest a shade
Of darker hours, round which no memory clings,
Down-deepening to the night which covers all.

PHILEMON. Ah, me! Would so that I stood far away
On that dim slope of time!

DION. Then shalt thou see
How shine and shade together are but one:
Unto which end grief, which companions joy,
Makes the bright less seem more. Thus do the Gods
Round man's brief gladness shed the beams of heaven.

PHILEMON. Thy words I shall find true when I am old :
But not true now. Linus, our joy, is dead !
I to the echoes cry his name ; but ever
Lonely a voice returns—not his, but mine.

LYCUS. Cry him no more ! Amid those echoes now
A sweeter voice hath homed. Hither come late,
For Linus we have Orpheus.

PHALISSA. What of him ?

[*Her voice startles the* SHEPHERDS, *and the sight of her causes disquiet.*

LYCUS. I, too, loved Linus. But when Orpheus sings,
Dead Linus lives again : twin brothers they,
Though parted from their birth. When Linus died——

PHILEMON. Not died—was slain ! By the sweet singing throat
Dogs took and tore him. So God smote him dumb !

LYCUS. Then, as we mourned him, came that newer strain
Mightier than his. When Orpheus sang, the earth
Woke out of sleep ; with upward rush of leaf
Spring came again, and all the clamorous woods
In trembling chorus cried : ' Orpheus is come ! '
Straightway yon stream—a seven years' vanishment
(So long thereof had drought bereft our fields)—

Out of its rock, reviving, gushed again.
So in our midst dwells peace unto this day.

[PHALISSA, *with metallic noise of bells at her girdle, crosses the stream, and offers to* DION *the wine cup wreathed in ivy.*

DION. Daughter, why this? Know'st thou not from of old
We shepherds drink no wine? In field and fold,
Pastured like herds, earth satisfies our need.

PHALISSA. And fed like herds, are of the herd-like breed.
Therefore take other counsel, for that is well!

DION. Strange words! What now?

PHALISSA. I have strange news to tell.

DION. Yes, and strange raiment also! Round thy head
What binds yon fillet of leaves?

PHALISSA. A serpent: dead,
Till the God give it life.

DION. The God, thou sayest?

PHALISSA. Aye! No meek God like those to whom thou prayest—
Pan of the herds, Demeter, bed of earth!
Unto this God no water-nymph gave birth—
But she, in whose veins ran such fierce desire
To clasp her lord, that, answering fire for fire,
So died she—his. And from those nuptials sprung
This new, this wondrous God, whom now man's tongue
Praises in many a land. Soon shall ye hear
The Bacchic chant, and see the rout draw near

Of dance and minstrelsy. Look! how they come
With clash of brazen cup, and beat of drum,
And tangled tresses flying from vine-crowned head,
And wine-stained bosoms bare, and raiment red,
And wonder, and great rejoicing. So shall ye see
New earth in the making, and man henceforth free!

DION. Well, thou hast told thy story. But when comes
This mighty God of thine, with noise of drums
And rout of revellers, let him discern
How simple a folk we be, and lightly turn
Some better way; and passing, come no more
To trouble us!

PHALISSA. He will not pass before
Ye pay him tribute.

DION. Tribute? We owe him none.

PHALISSA. For having given to all beneath the sun
This cup of joy, to him deep debt ye owe,
And worship.

DION. Which we render to him—so!

[*He takes the cup and reverses it, spilling the contents.*

Let him take back the gift, and waste his wine
No more on us, Daughter.

PHALISSA. Daughter of thine
I am not! In my blood a nobler strain,
Than ever thou didst breed on this dull plain,

For freedom pines. Oh, in what heifer's stead
Am I pent here, wasted for having wed
Thy son, that died, leaving this uneared womb
A barren field ? What—must it be my doom
Still mateless to remain while season runs
To season, bringing age ? Hast thou not sons
Enough, as churls to labour for thy need ?
Give me another mate, and let me breed
Strength to thy race ! Else shall my vows be given
Unto that God—be he of earth or heaven—
Who, from thy bondage brings my soul release !

DION. Thou proud, unquiet woman, hold thy peace !
Thy words have taught me nothing. I know well
How sorely many a day thou hast grudged to dwell
Beneath my roof, and that no fathering care
Could reconcile thee to the unsullied air
Of this still world of ours. Yet wast thou free
To go or come. My door stands wide for thee :
Whichever way thou wilt, thou canst pass through,
The choice is open.

[*He goes, accompanied by one of the* SHEPHERDS. PHALISSA *stands still for a while and looks after him.*

PHALISSA. Yea, and for others, too,
The choice is open. There remains more wine
Than thou hast spilt. [*She re-fills the cup.*

God ! how thine eyes do shine,
Ruddier than rubies ! O shepherds, hearken now !
Unto this God, released, I make my vow :
Take, Lord, for here I give myself to Thee !
Bacchus, thou art the God ! [*She drinks.*

LYCUS. O brothers, see
What light shines from her eyes !

[*She sways ; ecstasy takes hold of her ; she begins dancing.*

PHALISSA. Hither to me !
Hither to me ! Hither to me !
And I will show thee the ways of light ;
Till thy mouth be a song
For the heart made strong,
And thou shalt win glory in all men's sight.
Hither to me ! Hither to me !
Drink of this, and thy soul shall have wings !
Yea, thou shalt see, and thine ears shall hear
Great, and many, and marvellous things :
For the heavens shall open, the Gods shall appear.
Hither to me ! Hither to me !
A new God cometh by land and sea,
Hither to me !

PHILEMON. Why comes he hither ? His very name sounds strange.

PHALISSA. Light of the dawn to many a land brings change.

PHILEMON. Then, in man's waking, field and herd have part.

PHALISSA. That lies without ; this rises from the heart :

For thereunto with speed he enters in
And makes his dwelling-place. Then are ye kin
With God himself.

PHILEMON. Great bliss, were it but true!

PHALISSA. The proof awaits thee. Little thereof I knew,
Till with first tasting: then my soul grew wise.

PHILEMON. What profits he—having how great a prize?

PHALISSA. Even as a fisherman beside some strand
Sees the float dip, and draws his net to land
Rich with a myriad scales.

PHILEMON. For such reward
I would drink deep.

PHALISSA. Therefore I hailed him Lord,
Having so drained his cup. Why dost thou stand
Doubtful? Of what? Nay, come, reach out thy hand!
For this is life.

PHILEMON. Life? And therein what part
For better reward have I?

PHALISSA. He from thy heart
Shall banish grief.

PHILEMON. All grief?

PHALISSA. Yea, have no fear!
The dead arise. Thou shalt find Linus here.

PHILEMON. Of that, oh, were I sure! If it were true
Him would I worship!

PHALISSA. Thou say'st well. So do!

[*As* PHILEMON *is about to take the cup, music sounds in the near distance.*

LYCUS. Hark! It is Orpheus.

PHALISSA. O Shepherds, pay no heed
To that dull strain! Sweeter than ever reed
Breathed o'er by Pan, or touch of silver string,
This newer strain which to man's soul I bring.
Hearken to me, to me!

[*The music draws nearer.*

PHILEMON. Ah! softly there!
Orpheus that bringeth peace. Him, him I hear:
O sweetest minstrel! Hail!

[*Ignoring the proffered cup, he stands rapt.*

Enter ORPHEUS, *harping as he comes.*

ORPHEUS. Peace from of old
Be in your dwellings, brothers, and round the fold!
And thou, sweet Nymph, that in yon murmurous bed
Of rock-bound springs hidest thy secret head,
Peace to thy ways and waters without end!

PHALISSA [*meaningly*]. Unto thee also may she prove a friend,
When thou art lonely and none else is near.

ORPHEUS. Thou sayest well; for solitude is dear
In places loved of Pan.

PHALISSA. Far from his kind
Hither comes one that with a secret mind
Hath tasted of strange things.

ORPHEUS. The light of day
Is on my goings. When have I sought the way
Of darkness ever? Nay, what reproach is this?

PHALISSA. Surely I hold thee blameless; for the kiss
Thou gavest was like water, not like wine.

ORPHEUS. O bitter woman, what means this word of thine?

PHALISSA. Wisdom. Drink, Orpheus!
[*She offers him the cup.*

ORPHEUS. Nay, I thirst not yet.

PHALISSA. Noon is now passed; but ere yon sun be set
Thirst shall lie heavy upon thee; and like fire
A God shall stand 'twixt thee and thy desire.

ORPHEUS. What say'st thou?

PHALISSA. Naught. It was the God that spake.
O Orpheus, thou sweet singer, that wouldst make
This world anew, hereafter shall be told
Thy tale—but how the ways of the Gods are old
Beyond man's understanding. Yet, in truth,
My heart hath pity upon thee for thy youth
And comeliness; so would I be thy friend.

ORPHEUS. Better if thou be swift, and make an end.

PHALISSA. What I would say shall others stand to hear,
And thou be shamed?

ORPHEUS. Speak! Make thy meaning clear.
If unto any man I have done shame,
Let it be told. But if not, of what blame
Do I stand charged?

PHALISSA. Of dark and hidden ends.

ORPHEUS. No secrets have I from the eyes of friends.

PHALISSA. Only of foes, forsooth?

ORPHEUS. Why, who be they?

PHALISSA. Not all the world consents to go thy way.

ORPHEUS. Let each choose freely: none would I compel.

PHALISSA. Yet by false magic wouldst thou weave a spell
To bind all things on earth. Yea, herb and tree
Amazed do tremble at thy minstrelsy;
And snake and savage beast, all brought to shame,
Stricken in spirit, at thy touch grow tame,
To slothful sleep betrayed. Beneath thy hand
A plague of peace hath fallen upon this land!
What! Wilt thou teach the lion to chew the cud?
Rather would I see rivers turned to blood,
Than blood so emptied of its ancient fire!
Hearken, O God, and grant me my desire!
I know, I know why he doth haunt this spot
From morn till eve. And I would that this stream were not!
So come, thou God,

Vine-crowned, and clad like the pard,
And smite with thy rod this rock,
And the cleft of her hiding-place!
Is the way so rugged and hard
For thy feet to tread?
Shall she laugh? shall she mock?
Shall she stand in the way of thy might?
Come, then, and deep in its bed
This fountain of waters smite,
Till the flow of its streams runs red,
Till it sink, and be lost in night!

[*The* SHEPHERDS *are startled.* ORPHEUS *remains unmoved.*

ORPHEUS. What God is he, whose hand shall do this thing?

PHALISSA. He of the Vine, and the Cup, and the fangs that sting!

ORPHEUS. To other and older Gods our hearts belong.

PHALISSA. But swift of foot he comes, and his hands are strong.
The grape he hath crushed, and the vat with his wine runs red.

ORPHEUS. Let him drink thereof and be glad; let him crown his head
With leaf and cluster; let Satyrs dance in his train;
Let him pass through this land in peace, and return not again.

PHALISSA. Art thou so set? Dost thou deny this God?

ORPHEUS. I know him mighty and strong, and like fire to the clod.

PHALISSA. Therefore receive in thy heart the gift of his hand.

ORPHEUS. The vine hath her portion in earth—but not in this land:
Our ways are the ways of peace.

PHALISSA. Now surely, I deem,
In speech have I tarried too long to prepare a path.
I offered thee kindness; but soon, when he cometh in wrath,
Thy flock shall be scattered, and thou—forsaken, alone—
For spitting, and scorn, and reproach, shalt hereafter be known.
With the trample of dancing feet he shall stain thy stream,
And the triumph and shout of our chorus shall shatter thy dream. [*Exit* PHALISSA.

[*The* SHEPHERDS *stand to watch as she goes.* ORPHEUS *sits musing.* PHILEMON *strikes a sad note upon his lyre.*

1ST SEMI-CHORUS. In Phrygia springeth a river;
Red, red it runneth like blood,
And sweet in men's ears it singeth
Its burden of earth and the rains;
And the fields rejoice as it floweth in flood
With life from a dead man's veins.

2ND SEMI-CHORUS. For lo, it comes from the place of death,
From the cave of the playing, where flute to breath
Rang sharp; and the air became loud with cries,
As the God looked on with pitiless eyes,

When the doom of Heaven was brought to pass,
And mute fell the pipings of Marsyas.

[ORPHEUS *touches his lyre: the note changes; it becomes peaceful and rises to joy.*

ORPHEUS. On the brink of the spring which saw him bleed,
When all the fauns and dryads had fled,
The broken flute hath become a reed ;
Green it grows by the river's bed.
There, in the eddies that creep and cling,
With low, soft murmur, a voice doth sing—
How the wells of winter awake out of sleep,
And fountains of rivers arise in spring.

ACT II

The same scene; it is near sunset. ORPHEUS *is seated beside the spring.* SHEPHERDS *and* MAIDENS *are gathered round him. As the scene opens, the concluding notes of his harp are heard.*

ORPHEUS. Here, then, because your hearts incline thereto,
Peace hath her dwelling. Surely of old she knew
That the Gods' ways who dwell on earth are kind;
For, of like form and substance with man's mind,
That which fills Nature, and to field gives grass,
And fruit to tree, through them was brought to pass
In that dim-memoried world of ancient days,
Ere walls stood built, or temples decked for praise.
Patiently and unrecognised they wrought
To fashion life, and to wild natures taught
The natural law—casting thereon no spell,
Nor worship claimed by sign or miracle.
This was that Golden Age which bards have sung.

Then from high heaven was heard the angry tongue
Of Gods with Gods at war. That conflict dire
Creation's doom foretold : then fierce desire,
Anger, and emulation, hate, and scorn
Infection bred ; so in man's heart was born
Fierce pride and lust for power, that he might be
Mighty as Gods in wrath and enmity.
Thus in God's image man created man
To his undoing. The Iron Age began,
And ends not yet.

[*He strikes a note upon his harp.*

But ye that love green earth,
Be faithful unto Pan, and to his worth
Offer yourselves, seeing that ye are of kind.
For mortal knows not the celestial mind,
Nor scales the star-built mansions of the sky.
Above his lowliness the heavens stand high ;
Their laughter is immortal, and his grief
Troubles them not.

LYCUS. Oh, to what strange belief
Wouldst thou compel us ? Where, then, shall the soul
Of man find comfort ?

ORPHEUS. He that would see life whole
Must measure good with ill.

DION. Thou sayest well ;
For that breeds patience.

ORPHEUS. This day, ye heard tell,
A new God cometh—yea, a God of might.

DION. Naught unto us.

ORPHEUS. To many he gives delight,

And many a travelled land hath owned him lord ;
Yet in his train he bears no spear or sword :
But peaceful seems, bidding men's hearts rejoice.

DION. Why should we shepherds hear him, when thy voice
Sounds sweeter to our ears ?

ORPHEUS. If with glad hearts
Ye hold as ye have heard, the God departs,
And to your dwelling-place comes not again.

DION. Belated at locked doors he drums in vain.

PHILEMON. Yet some went forth as the loud rumour grew.

DION. Phalissa ?

PHILEMON. Aye ; with her went others too.

DION. Well, well, so be it ! Young blood must live and learn.
Give her God-speed ! Soon shall the rest return,
Sheep from the shearers.

Enter MESSENGER, *running.*

MESSENGER. Help ! Ho ! Where are the men ?
A wolf is in the fold ! Out of their den
In the dark forest come the reveller bands
With timbrels, dancing : and with lawless hands
Ten yeanlings of the herd and oxen twain
Hence have they haled and on wood-altars slain ;
And every victim to the slaughter led
With wreaths of sacrifice go garlanded.

Then each slain carcase limb from limb they tear,
And in loud triumph as bloody trophies bear.
These now, a mingled mob, people and priest,
In drunken revelry rejoice and feast :
Hearken, and ye shall hear !

[*Sounds of distant revelry and shouting are heard.*

DION [*rising*]. Soon shall they know
The price thereof ! Our shepherd crooks will show
These rogues how honest folk a reckoning take.
Up, all of you !

[*The* SHEPHERDS, *staves in hand, leap to their feet.*

ORPHEUS. So doing, shall ye make
Your slaughtered sheep and oxen live again ?

DION. Let them bleat loud enough, and lightly then
Our wrath shall be appeased.

ORPHEUS. To hear men's throats
Filled with the bleating of slain sheep and goats—
What profit is it ? When strangers in this land
Make sojourn, have ye not ever, with free hand,
Bestowed of your abundance for their need,
Both food and shelter ?

DION. But these men by greed
Have robbed us, using force.

ORPHEUS. Not having guessed

Thy will to succour them. Were it not best
To leave it so ? Let them depart in peace.

DION. What ! go unpunished ! and thenceforth never cease
Boasting them of the evil they have done ?

ORPHEUS. Old shepherd of the herds, doth not the sun
Shine on the evil and on the good alike ?
Is God's hand alway lifted swift to strike
Each evil-doer according to his deed ?
Is not the good thou sowest on earth like seed ?—
Here let it fall or there, on smooth or rough,
The field prepared for it shall yield enough
To give it increase. If thy way be kind,
Is it unprofitable when some are blind ?

DION. Orpheus, an I had never heard thee sing,
Foolish, I ween, had seemed such counselling
Unto mine ears. But what thou art I know :
A man of peace. Ne'er hast thou found a foe,
To whatsoever land thy feet have come.
For I have seen how savage beasts grow dumb
And meek to thy sweet music. By what law
Of reconciliation dost thou draw
And join all kinds together, whole and part ?

ORPHEUS. No blood hath stained these hands, nor in my heart
Hath wrath been kindled : therefore I have no fear.

DION. Well, be it so ! Thy counsel I will hear.
Let them depart in peace.

[*He re-seats himself.*

ORPHEUS [*speaking to music*]. Under the heart of
Earth,
Deep in the faithful breast,
Peace abideth, and rest,
Rest for the sons of men.
For of her spring rivers to birth ;
Then cometh the kindly yield
Of herb, and flower, and grass,
And the joy of the harvest field.
The fruits thereof though they pass,
Take root and return again.

DION. 'Tis my own word in blessing come back
to me !
Sons, Brothers, are ye content ?
[*The* SHEPHERDS *sign agreement.*
So let it be !
Orpheus, play on !

ORPHEUS. Now as I know
Compassion is in your hearts, come, I will show
Unto your eyes a mystery most dear,
Which here hath dwelling ; and ye shall have
no fear
Because of it. Oh, hearken all of ye,
And with pure hearts explore. Hither to me !
[*He rises and stands before the fountain.*
And Thou, O Holy Mother of mute Earth,
That to all flesh gives life, accept the worth
Of these thy servants !
[*He strikes his harp. The* SHEPHERDS
gaze in wonder and astonishment.

ORPHEUS. Hither to me ! Hither to me,
O Fount of the sacred spring !
Why art thou ever content to fling,

Like a veil of dreams,
These shifting gleams,
These falling waters, these silver streams,
Over the face of thy loveliness ?

LYCUS. Oh, look, how it leaps with redoubled shock !

PHILEMON. The fountain gushes from rock to rock !

DION. What marvel is this that mine eyes behold ?

ORPHEUS. Dost thou not live ?
Art thou not strong ?
Forward to give,
Faithful to bless ?
Does not this land to thy love belong ?
Are not its fields for thy feet to press ?
And the wealth of its flocks and herds is thine,
And thy streams to its drouth much better than wine,
For the grape is less green than the water-cress.
Show unto faithful eyes
That beauty in earth which lies,
The light of thy loveliness !
Awake, arise, stand forth, and be free,
Strip off the veil of thy streams that fall,
Hear, and answer, Eurydice !
Come, for I call !

[*Amid the flowing waters that cover the sides of the cavern,* EURYDICE *appears.*

EURYDICE. Under my rocks and springs I heard thy voice,
Orpheus, O heart's delight, bidding me rise.

Therefore I stand revealed before men's eyes.
What is thy will ?

ORPHEUS. O living Land, rejoice !
Behold what blessing in the midst of thee
Dwells from of old. And thou, Eurydice,
Be tender-eyed, compassionate, and kind
To these thy lovers, faithful of heart and mind,
That fain would serve thee. Therefore, as thou dost bear
Friendship for all this land—oh, speak them fair !

EURYDICE. Shepherds, in my streams I bring
Healing to your flocks and herds ;
In the music of my spring
Hear ye ever without words
Earth an ancient wisdom sing.
Hearken, simple as ye be,
To that voice of melody :
If ye hear it, ye are free !

[*She descends into their midst. The* SHEPHERDS *kneel before her.* ORPHEUS *plays his harp.*

O Shepherd hearts, attend !
This boon I send you :
Where'er my waters wend—
By ways where willows bend,
By brake or rocky fall,
Under cliff or mountain wall,
Or through banks of rush and reed,
Valley, hill, and flowering mead—
If to these voices ye take heed,
They shall befriend you.

DION. So were we friends of old: for in this place
Often, unknowing, have I seen thy face,
And learned those voices.

PHILEMON. Also to thee, most dear,
Have I brought sorrow, and sought comfort here.

EURYDICE. Drink, and find comfort still!

[*She lifts her hands from the fountain, and offers them as a cup to the* SHEPHERDS. *They advance and drink in turn.* ORPHEUS *comes also.*

Wherefor to thee,
Orpheus, dear heart? What canst thou seek of me
That is not thine? Hither, when stars shone bright
Oft hast thou come alone.

ORPHEUS. So in men's sight
Here would I stand confessed, and by these wells
Of living water where thy spirit dwells
Changeless for ever, vow myself to thee;
That neither in life nor death shall parting be
Betwixt us twain. So hear me! By this hand,
In wedded love, plighted to thee I stand.
Earth hears my vow. Here will we build our dreams:
Out of my music wedded to thy streams
Cities shall rise, and the round world be blest.
And thou, fair bridal bower, that bringest rest
Unto our hearts this night, come, now undo
Those crystal doors, and let kind love pass through!

Hither to me, to me! O Fount of the sacred spring!

[*He reaches his hand to* EURYDICE, *she hers with a farewell gesture to the* SHEPHERDS; *then turns and is clasped by* ORPHEUS. *A fall of water covers them.*

DION. O spirit, contain thy wonder! Why do ye stand
In such amazement, reaching hand to hand,
As men bereft of sight?

PHILEMON. Too human kind,
The beauty of that vision hath made me blind!
Oh, how shall I speak the word?
Have we not come to the place where the voice of no God was heard?

DION. Earth hath her dreams! O Mother Earth, now keep
Safe in thy breast these lovers; give them sleep—
And peace to all!

[*He moves slowly away accompanied by one of the* MAIDENS. *As they go they raise their hands in salutation toward the cavern.*

CHORUS. Hither, Goddess of the Chase,
Spring no arrows, bend no bow!
Peace and rest are in this place,
Call, oh, call thy hounds away!
Artemis, with heart of snow,
Hither come not now to slay!

1ST SEMI-CHORUS. Here, where quiet waters flow,
Lay thy quiver, loose thy bow,
Cease the sounding of thy horn!

2ND SEMI-CHORUS. But if now, with rising power,
Facing toward lands of morn,
In thy breast some gift thou bearest,
If for human kind thou carest,
If from heaven man's bliss be born—
Here, in this most sacred hour,
Round the secrets of this bower,
Through the changes of thy moon
Shed on these a changeless boon!

[*They approach the entrance of the cave in solemn procession.*

1ST SEMI-CHORUS. Holy, holy, is this place;
Hushed upon the water's face
Mingling eddies meet, embrace.
Hark! Canst thou hear them?

[*They stoop to listen.*

2ND SEMI-CHORUS. Nay, but shepherds, come away,
Hallowed darkness here holds sway,
Hence, oh, hence, till dawn of day!
Linger not near them!

[*They begin to go out.*

1ST SEMI-CHORUS. Through this wood enchantment wakes:
No leaf stirs, no blossom breaks,
Not a wood-branch bends or shakes,
No wind to stir them.

[*They move slowly away, following the others.*

PHILEMON. Soundless the water welleth
As the fountain findeth release,
Here in the silence dwelleth
A wonder of peace!

[*All go out. The place remains empty.*

Moonlight floods the scene with intense brightness.

From the distance comes the beating of a drum; then a rumour of confused voices and chanting. Suddenly with loud cries, brandishing torch and thyrsus, comes the band of BACCHANALS *led by* PHALISSA.

BACCS. Io, Io, Bacchus! Bacchus, Io! Io!

PHALISSA. Come, I will lead you, come! Follow me still as I go!

BACCS. Io! Ho, there! Bacchus! Bacchus, Io! Io!

CHORUS. Io, Io, Bacchus!
Bacchus, God of the Vine!
Hear! We call to thee, Bacchus:
Shall not the earth be thine?
Shall not the rivers shrink
And mountains melt at thy nod,
When the nations gather to drink
Thy wine, and acclaim thee God?

BACCS. Hail, Bacchus! Oh, hail! Bacchus, he is the God!

PHALISSA. Loud, call him aloud! Now let your voice be heard!
Bacchus, Bacchus, the God! Yea, smite the rock with that word!
Smite till her streams be stricken, till the fount of her springs be stirred!

CHORUS. Bacchus, the wine,
Bacchus, the cup,
The draught is divine,
So drink we it up!
Out of the body floweth

The blood of the Victim slain !
His flesh we have flayed, he goeth
To death, he riseth again !

BACCS. Io, Io, Bacchus ! Bacchus, he is the God !

PHALISSA. Down, down to these waters !
Trample them under your feet !
Ye the daughters and sons of the God whose flesh ye eat,
Now to his honour and praise let the dancers mingle and tread :
Stain ye, stain ye the waters with wine till the stream runs red !

BACCS. Io, Io, Bacchus !

[*Music is heard from the cave, silence falls on the* BACCHANALS.

1ST BACC. Hark ! Whence is that sound ?

PHALISSA. Heed not ! Why should ye heed ?
Shout till its voice be drowned !

BACCS. Io ! Io !

2ND BACC. But there ! Hark, I hear it again !

PHALISSA. Shall the lion tremble for fear, if the jackal howls in its den ?
What hath made ye afraid ? Is it sheep that ye are, not men ?

ORPHEUS *appears in the mouth of the cave followed by* EURYDICE. *He continues to strike upon his harp.*

1ST BACC. Lo, lo, there, He cometh ! Out of yon rock doth rise
A vision of living water ! What wonder filleth mine eyes !

BACCS. [*in a last effort*]. Io, Io, Bacchus ! Bacchus, Lord of the vine ! [*They stand discomforted.*

PHALISSA. O water-wizard, com'st thou to taste
my wine ?
ORPHEUS. Surely a sweeter draught flows here
than thine.
Drink, and find peace !
PHALISSA. Find peace ? Nay, not for this
Did we come hither ! Here, in the cup we kiss,
The grape we press, all heaven lies opened
wide
For man's redemption. . . . What woman at thy
side
Stands yonder ?
ORPHEUS. She, the fountain of whose rock
Your feet defile.
PHALISSA. She, whose chill waters mock
The God we worship !
ORPHEUS. Nay, to each his choice.
Go your own ways.
PHALISSA. Wilt thou not hear his voice—
Not though he cries to thee ? In slothful
dreams
Thy soul is sunk. Come, Bacchus, drain these
streams
Till they be dry ! Up, up ! Cry ye aloud !
Bacchus, O Bacchus !
BACCS. Io, Bacchus, the Wine !
Io, Bacchus, the Cup !
The streams of the earth are thine ;
Drink ye, drink ye it up !
[ORPHEUS *strikes upon his lyre. The* BACCHANALS *fall back.*
1ST BACC. Ai, Ai, Bacchus !
Cold is the water's flow.

2ND BACC. Back, back to the winepress
Hence away, let us go !
PHALISSA. So shall the God be shamed for ever !
Ho, women, come ye !
Come ye, gather and hearken ; and I will show you a thing !
Unloose your girdles, lift up the weight of these coils that cling !
Io, Bacchus, the God, the Cup, and the fangs that sting !
[*With snakes drawn from fillet and girdle they leap furiously upon* EURYDICE. PHALISSA, *brandishing a snake, strikes at her breast.* EURYDICE *falls.*
PHALISSA. Hither, hither to me ! The vengeance of God am I !
EURYDICE. Orpheus ! Oh, I am slain ! By the hand of a God I die !
PHALISSA. Out of the body floweth
The blood of the victim slain.
Her flesh we have taken ; she goeth
To death, He riseth again !
BACCS. Io, Io, Bacchus ! Bacchus, the God !
[*The* BACCHANALS *rush out with cries of triumph, followed by* PHALISSA.
ORPHEUS. Woe, woe ! Oh, woe ! What darkness from thine eyes
Hath drunk the light ? Eurydice, arise !
'Tis Orpheus calls thee !
EURYDICE. Orpheus, I bid thee—come !
ORPHEUS. Here, I am here ! Oh, faint breath be not dumb !
Depart not from me yet ; abide one hour !

Re-enter SHEPHERDS : *they stand silent and awestruck.*

EURYDICE. O Orpheus, follow me ! Thy strains have power,
Even in death—in death, shall they prevail.
Clasp me, and keep me thine—keep !—or I fail.
Where art thou, Orpheus ? Orpheus, look on me !

ORPHEUS. Yea ! Through deep waters !

EURYDICE. Unto a sunless sea
I go, the wanderer of a desolate shore.
Thither, ah, thither, unto me—Oh, come !
[*She dies ; the fountain ceases to flow.*

ORPHEUS. The light of her eyes is gone : she sees no more.
The breath is away. Woe, woe ! And the lips are dumb.
[*The* SHEPHERDS *approach and gaze on the dried fountain ; then turn to* ORPHEUS.

CHORUS. To many a load of grief
Hath Earth given rest from of old ;
But the tears of man are a stream
That riseth ever anew.
For life is a falling leaf
That spilleth its bloom like dew.
O heart, what is left thee to hold,
If love be a broken dream ?

1ST SEMI-CHORUS. Wert thou a bird, O Beloved,
Borne from thy nest and thy mate,
Hadst thou on wings like a swallow
Flown to the fields of the sun,
I would arise and follow,

And come to thee early or late ;
I would attend on thy word,
And swiftly with thee find rest.
But now, as scent from the rose,
As light from the face of day,
The spirit is gone from thy clay,
And who knows whither it goes ?

2ND SEMI-CHORUS. Hadst thou the feet of a faun
Native to mountain and hollow,
Quick up crag over crest
Where the hill-streams gather and leap,
I would arise and follow
Thy track from the glimmer of dawn,
Till the glory of day dips down
To the silent fields of sleep.
But the dance in thy feet is dumb ;
Should I arise to follow,
Where should our ways now meet ?
Whither at last should I come ?

CHORUS. For the touch of death is cold,
And the eyes of the dead are blind ;
They go, they look not behind
To the sorrows they leave on earth.
Who knows if the dead have a mind
In the land where all is dearth ?

Enter from the cave four figures stoled in grey. They move slowly, bearing a pall : their faces and eyes are lustreless. Advancing they hold the pall suspended over the dead body of EURYDICE.

LEADER OF CHORUS. Speak ! Who are ye that stand
Silently there,

Still, without motion or breath,
Gazing at grief unappalled ?
Wherefor come ye, uncalled,
Forth from what place of death ?
What is this in your hand,
Raiment or shroud that ye bear ?

1ST SHADE. We are the ghosts of rivers
Dead from the days of yore.

2ND SHADE. By the banks of flowerless meads,
To the sighing of rushes and reeds,
We stayed the course of our steeds,
We went, we returned no more.

3RD SHADE. Our waters dwindled and fled,
They failed at the fountain's head,
They shrank till the river's bed
Lay dry as a desert shore.

4TH SHADE. Earth-bound that once were free,
Empty of hand came we,
Where the sands of death lie frore
On the shores of a desolate sea.

1ST SHADE. Come down, sister, now,
Thou body, thou bed of clay !
For the springs of thy fountain are withered away
From the rock of their rising place.

2ND SHADE. Fairest of all wast thou ;
Therefore we cover thy face :
Sweetest—we cover thy breast, O sweet !
Fleetest of foot, we cover thy feet.
Come down, thou river of rest !

[*They cover her with the pall.*

3RD SHADE. For thy streams lie reaped in the field of death,

In the land of forgetting, of time out of mind,
Where the sevenfold rivers coil and wind,
And gather the sheaves to their breast and bind;

4TH SHADE. Where never shall grass take root in ground,
Where never again shall the lost be found,
Where the murmur of many rivers is drowned
In a sea without sound or breath.

[*They lift* EURYDICE *to her feet; covered by the pall, with head fallen back and arms hanging, she is borne upright away into the cave.*

[*As they disappear, the* SHEPHERDS *follow and stand looking into the cave, then turn and gaze at* ORPHEUS, *who lies prostrate. Day begins coldly to dawn. Birds wake; and the sheep-song of Linus, sung by a* SHEPHERD BOY, *is heard from the distant field.*

SHEPHERD BOY [*sings*]. Wake from sleep!
Night is old.
Come, ye sheep,
And quit your fold:
All afield! All afield!
New day fires
The hearts of men:
Heart's desires
Do live again, do live again!
All afield!

ACT III

SCENE I

A hill-top, and pinewood dark against the grey beginnings of dawn. In a clearing of felled trees an altar of hewn timber stands upon a mound: behind it is sky. All about stand the jagged stumps of trees broken by storm. Before the altar stands PHALISSA, *in priestly robes, bearing thyrsus and wine cup. Dispersed among the trees lie the* BACCHANALS *heavy from past carousal. Two* BACCHANALS, *attendants of the altar, stand near. In the distance the* SHEPHERD BOY'S *song is heard.*

SHEPHERD BOY [*sings*]. Air and Earth,
Where dwell ye,
Give you mirth
And eyes to see.
All afield! All afield!
So may man,
For joy of Earth,
Praising Pan
And his great worth,
Sing again, and sing again!
All afield!

1ST BACC. Why dost thou stand and wait? Wherefor begins not the feast?

PHALISSA. The God appointeth the time: he chooseth victim and priest.

1ST BACC. Is there no grape in the cup? Have we not wine and meat?

PHALISSA. The grape hangs yet on the vine, and the must hath not stained our feet.

2ND BACC. How say'st thou ? Is not the day of the vintage over and done ?

PHALISSA. One last cluster thereof hangs high in the sight of the sun.

1ST BACC. Wherefore hangs it yet, if the hour for the feast draws near ?

PHALISSA. There, in that time when the feast is set, the grape shall appear.

2ND BACC. But for the vinting thereof where shall we find the vat ?

PHALISSA. Ye shall know in that hour, in that place, when god-like he standeth thereat.

[PHALISSA *gives wine cup and thyrsus to the two servers, and descends from the altar. A* BACCHANAL, *rousing, lifts from her breast the head of a sleeper.*

WOMAN BACC. O Bacchus, giver of rest,
Take the load from my breast.

[*The other* BACCHANALS *begin to rouse from their slumbers.*

1ST BACC. ' God-like,' thou say'st ?

PHALISSA. Yea ; patience, and let be !
Even so he cometh ; and him all eyes shall see,
And all lips taste. Then, surely, not in vain
The victim dies, if that he rise again.
For in his death all sharers shall ye be ;
As, when a river floweth to the sea,
The fields drink deep thereof, and the flocks go filled.

1ST BACC. Unto that death hath he himself so willed ?

PHALISSA. As the slain bullock to the altar goes
Unknowing, so little of his own fate he knows.
But in that hour there cometh to him a God
Of great compassion and mercy, and his rod
Smites without wrath. Though men resist his will,
Gently, like sheep, he takes and leads them still:
And whosoever shall his power deny,—
Cometh a day, he saith, 'That God am I.'—
Yet knows not what he saith; nor do his eyes
Behold what altar waits—what sacrifice.
So, blind of purpose, but of destined will,
God-bound he goes—immortal, mortal still:
And as the Vine, from a dark earth-bound root
Unto the sun's rays putteth forth her fruit,
Or as the grape which kindling turns to wine,
So in meek flesh kindles the Form divine:—
Whom when ye see—that godhead shaped in clay—
With wonder and worship take, and bind, and slay!

[*The* BACCHANALS *are startled at her last word.*

1ST BACC. Slay we the God?

[PHALISSA *returns to the altar, from which at her touch springs a thin spire of flame.*

PHALISSA. As wood is slain by fire!
So shall ye come at last to your desire,—
Flesh of his flesh to be.

2ND BACC. What sign shall show
When in man's form he comes, that we may know?

PHALISSA. God's hand is on him, and God's voice ordains :
The victor's crown he wears—the captive's chains.

1ST BACC. Whither for worship do we bear him then ?

PHALISSA. Up to this altar, whereon, slain of men,
Dead though he be, yet shall he rise again.

BACCS. IN CHORUS. Io, Bacchus, the God !
Thou art victim and priest.
Smite, smite with thy rod
The earth, and let all flesh feast !

PHALISSA. High on earth is his dwelling, yet lowly he cometh to be.

CHORUS. Io, Bacchus the God,
Mighty and strong to deliver !

PHALISSA. Here set we on high his sign for all eyes to see.

CHORUS. Io, the Serpent, the Rod.
The Vine, maker and giver !

[*They raise above the altar a high wooden pole with cross-bar, from which hangs a brazen serpent bound with garlands of vine and grape clusters.*

1ST BACC. Tell us, O priestess, again ; what meaneth for us yon sign ?

CHORUS. Io, Bacchus the Wine,
Healer, Redeemer, and Lord !

PHALISSA. Strength is the Rod, and wisdom the Worm, and beauty the Vine.

CHORUS. Bacchus, juice of the Vine,
Beauty and joy outpoured !

PHALISSA. So come, thou God, and lead the feet of thy flock
Unto that place where we shall find thee indeed!
And whether we find thee then in a cave of rock,
In the bed of a stream, or a broken and sighing reed,—
There let thy strength be shown, stretch forth thy hand,
Let thy voice be heard, and thy name become great in this land!

[*The sky suddenly darkens. For a moment the* BACCHANALS *are dismayed and fearful.*

PHALISSA. He cometh! He cometh! He maketh darkness his sign.
Io, Io, Bacchus! Bacchus, Lord of the Vine!

[*Cymbals clash. There comes an answering roll of thunder.*

BACCS. [*doubtful still*]. Io! Io!—

[*Again the cymbals clash. Thunder answers; and the darkness deepens.* PHALISSA *ascends to the altar and lights a torch at its fire. Others follow and do likewise.*

1ST SEMI-CHORUS. When Wind or when Thunder awaketh,
Doth he uncover his face?
Canst thou call forth, bid rise,
Or bring again to his lair?
Hast thou with mortal eyes
Measured his stature aright,
As he reacheth his hand to smite,
As he rideth on wings of air?

CHORUS. Io, Io, Bacchus! Bacchus, Lord of the Vine! [*Thunder.*

2ND SEMI-CHORUS. Who shall declare his form,
Or fathom his hiding-place?
Beneath him forests are bowed,
And the face of the heavens is dim
With flying vapour and cloud,
As he shaketh the pillars of night.
But when hath thine eye seen him,
Who goeth abroad in his might,—
Who bindeth, who bendeth, who breaketh,
Whose voice is the storm?

[*Thunder and sheet-lightning follow; then darkness without sound.* (*The dance and song of the sacrificial procession begins.*) PHALISSA *stands high at the altar as the procession passes round, beneath, and out.*

CHORUS. Come, Creator of the Vine,
Drain thy vats, draw forth thy wine,
Out of Heaven in that draught
Mortal man hath nectar quaffed.
Earth is thine! Earth is thine!

1ST SEMI-CHORUS. Over valley, over hill,
Let the tendrilled stems take hold
Of the vine-stakes fold on fold,
Climb, and clasp, and coil at will!
Come, and with thy vintage fill
Rock, and river-bed, and rill;—
From whose ruddier clusters pressed,
We a sweeter draught distil,
Earth, than ever left thy breast,—
Rivers old, and fountains cold.

2ND SEMI-CHORUS. Then come peoples, rulers, states,
Open wide your city gates ;
In your fields the Conqueror waits :
To his feet your tribute bring !
Pile your arms, lay down your shields,
Unashamed the vanquished yields.
In your fields the Conqueror waits :
Bacchus comes ; fling wide your gates !
Crown him King ! Oh, crown him King !

CHORUS. Hail, Creator of the Vine !
Cup immortal, crowned with wine !
Out of Heaven in that draught
Mortal man hath nectar quaffed.
Earth is thine ! Earth is thine !

[*As the last Chorus begins,* PHALISSA *descends from the altar, and goes swiftly out. The* BACCHANALS *open their ranks to let her pass. The Procession continues its way, leaving the stage empty. The song dies away into the distance. The darkness of storm changes to twilight. On the altar the symbol of the God stands solitary against the light of dawn.*

ACT III

SCENE II

The same as Acts I. and II. ORPHEUS *lies prostrate beside the cave's entrance. In the grey light of morning enter* MAIDENS, *veiled and bearing wreaths. One carries an urn. They stand before the dried fountain, and lay their votive offerings: while one pours water, the others strew leaves and flowers.*

1ST SEMI-CHORUS. Drop, drop, where streams have ceased to flow,
Your tears of human fellowship,
To this dry bed, to this dry bed,
And make as though she were not dead!
So, in soft showers shall ye show
(If unto shades 'tis given to know)
Remembrance dear where she lies low,
Where she lies dead.

2ND SEMI-CHORUS. Ye blooms and myrtle boughs, now strip
Your leaves away, your leaves away!
Come from your merry bowers of day
Where dancing dryads meet and trip,
Come down unto this bed of clay,
This bed of clay!
For ye on earth were moving things,
Ye drank the rains, ye saw the sun:
But now the Naiad's day is done,
And now no more the Minstrel sings.

CHORUS. So shed away, so shed away
To these dead springs your leaves, where day

Comes not, and night no comfort brings,
No comfort brings!

[*The* MAIDENS *move slowly from the stream-bed, and pass out. Meanwhile the* SHEPHERDS *have entered. Coming to where* ORPHEUS *lies, they halt.*

LEADER OF CHORUS. Briefer than any trumpet blown
To king's renown, or warrior's fame,
The breath which fanned a mutual flame
In hearts which had made joy their own.

1ST SEMI-CHORUS. Now to void air that breath goes blown;

2ND SEMI-CHORUS. Now down to darkness sinks the flame.

1ST SEMI-CHORUS. So man's desires in dust are sown,
And mortal fires to ashes strown.

2ND SEMI-CHORUS. He shares his joy a little while,
Then back to grief returns alone.

1ST SEMI-CHORUS. So cometh Fate; and no man knoweth
Whither he goeth,
Or whence he came.

During the singing of the CHORUS, DION *has entered accompanied by* PHILEMON *and* LYCUS. *They stand looking at* ORPHEUS; *then* DION, *accompanied by* LYCUS, *crosses and sits down.* PHILEMON, *still standing beside* ORPHEUS, *turns and speaks.*

PHILEMON. And thou too, Linus, art dead!
Faithful he watched by the fold.

But Apollo slew him ; jealous and cold
Of heart was he ; and the doom he sped
Smote into dust the fair young head.
For the voice of Linus to men gave mirth,
And his song brought joy to the ears of Earth ;
So the voice grew mute :
So the heart lies dead !
See, where he shines, in the morning's gold !
Yonder he comes ; and round him hangs
The pelt of a wolf that his hands have slain.
And the wolf-hounds leap, and the bloody fangs
Have taken and torn him ! And ever again
Rings in my ears his piteous cry :
' I am slain ! By the wrath of a God I die ! '

[PHILEMON *moves disconsolately away.* ORPHEUS *slowly raises himself. All stand silently waiting.*

ORPHEUS. Up to the light of day I lift mine eyes,
Blind with long weeping.
Is there no more a sun in yonder skies ?
Death in his keeping
Holds, to return not ever,
That bliss for a moment mine !
Her beauty I shall look again on never,
By moon or star-shine.

DION. Yet in the grave lies peace for those whom the Gods have blest.
Doubt not that when they cease from life Earth gives them rest.

ORPHEUS. Nay, anguished was her face
With terror and dismay ;
Death, from my fast embrace,
Plucked the live heart away !

A ruin, where love once built,
A vessel of ointment spilt,—
Not man's, a God's was the guilt,
When shattered, a wreck she lay!

DION. She sees not now the storm; hears not the beat of waves.
There have her feet found rest in the dim deep world of graves.

ORPHEUS. O Life, why didst thou give
Sight to this brain?
I dream that I see her live,—
Yet know that the dream is vain.
Yonder she stands, a form of light,
Not to be found again!

[*He strikes upon his harp, and speaks to music.*

Oh, I am torn! In mortal frame
Immortal griefs have kindled flame!
I feed the fire with thy dear name,
Eurydice! Eurydice!
Now I give back to thee in death
The latest utterance of thy breath,—
Hear, from my soul thy soul which saith—
'Orpheus, oh, haste, and come to me!'

LEADER OF CHORUS. Woe, woe! that word!
Wilt thou forsake the light,
And all thy lovers? Is thy heart set on night,—
Thy soul on death?

[ORPHEUS *rises suddenly, and stands transfixed.*

What means that fixéd look,
That sudden and upward start of hope which took
And tore thee back to life?

ORPHEUS. Under the sun,
Body and soul we were one . . .
In the blindness and terror of night,
Be thou my light! . . .
In the downward ravine of death,
Thou be my breath! . . .
O Death, hast thou hands to give,
To render what Life hath slain?
Then let her arise, and return, and live:
Or I come not again!

[*He advances toward the cavern.*

LEADER OF CHORUS. Alas! not there shalt thou find her: the fount of those springs is fled.

[ORPHEUS *continues to advance.*

Orpheus! whom dost thou seek?

ORPHEUS. Hades, King of the Dead.

LEADER OF CHORUS. Darest thou utter his name?

ORPHEUS. Unto that realm I go,
Where the light of my life lies bound; and where no streams flow.

LEADER OF CHORUS. So shalt thou come to thy doom! O Hell, thou art fed!
Thou hast made of this land a tomb, where all joy lies dead!

ORPHEUS. Ye shepherds, hearken to me ere I go!
Man dies but once. Therefore when comes great woe,
What hath he left—but only sorrow and pain,
Wherein, henceforth, no treasure is found nor gain:
Why should he cherish it? Yet—if the Gods
Allow—if, caring naught, against great odds,

He seeks that prize, without which life were vain,
And—if so be—rewarded, comes again
Back with his dead upraised : then with what eyes
Will ye behold, and worship, and name him wise,
Who to that end gave all ? And now this thing
My spirit hath conceived ; for I will sing
In the dull ears of Death—and I will stand
Where Hades sits enthroned, till from his hand
Comes recompense—ending to grief and pain.
And I will bring her back to earth again.

LEADER OF CHORUS. How canst thou hope to reach the heart of Hell ?

ORPHEUS. Mortal am I, yet in me Song doth dwell.

LEADER OF CHORUS. Wilt thou find Death compassionate of sweet sound ?

ORPHEUS. That soul, which hears it, is no longer bound.

LEADER OF CHORUS. Alas ! Thou goest for ever from mine eyes.

ORPHEUS. Nay, hearken ! Thou shalt see her fountains rise
From these dead springs again. And then shall be
A joy, a marvel ; yea, a life set free
From chains of death ! Hear me, Eurydice !
To thee, to thee I come ! Ye fates, make whole

That life which ye have reft, or take my soul!
Eurydice! Eurydice!

[*He enters the cave. The sound of his harping dies away. The* SHEPHERDS *approach awestruck, and stand listening. As the music ceases,* PHALISSA *appears above, and stands for a while watching silently. Then she descends the path. Exit* DION. *Gradually the* BACCHANALS *enter.*

PHALISSA. Why stand ye shepherds gazing on that bed
Of withered streams? Know ye not she is dead?

PHILEMON. Naught know we yet. The dead may rise again.

PHALISSA. Not they, I ween, whom a God's hand hath slain.

PHILEMON. Whom one God slays, a greater may bid rise.

PHALISSA. What God is he can grant so dear a prize?

LEADER OF CHORUS. Him whom men name not —Ruler of the Dead.

PHALISSA. Hades?

LEADER OF CHORUS. Thou say'st.

PHALISSA. No prayer lips ever sped
Hath been so answered.

LYCUS. Yet may Song prevail.

PHALISSA. What man is he whose song may so assail
The will of Fate?

LYCUS. He, whom thy hand did wrong :
Who marvellously now descends with song
Unto that underworld ; and thence shall bring
A life renewed, healed of thy serpent's sting
And rod of Vine !

PHALISSA. Strange fables hast thou read.
Living, no man goes down among the dead.

LYCUS. Living, we saw him go !

PHALISSA. From light of day ?

LEADER OF CHORUS. Where sank these streams to death, that downward way
His feet have followed.

LYCUS. And thence again shall rise !

PHALISSA. And Bacchus then stand mocked before men's eyes !
His cup of vengeance spilt, shattered his rod !

BACCS. Io, Io, Bacchus ! Bacchus, the God !

[*Unrest has taken hold of the* BACCHANALS. PHALISSA *stays them with uplifted hand.*

PHALISSA. Hear, and be thou mine aid, O God twice-born !
To that dim underworld of midnight shade,
Where shines no morn, do thou companion me :
So shall mine eyes have sight.
For what are we,
Back if he come, a conqueror to this land,
Bearing from death that life which he hath won ?
The Vine is vanquished then ; new day is done ;
Old night returns. Therefore reach out thy hand
And thither guide !

[*She drinks, and stands tranced.*

1ST BACC. What dost thou hear ?
2ND BACC. What see ?
PHALISSA. Yonder he goes ! and with sweet minstrelsy
Filleth the caverned ways. . . . From cleft and rock
Dead forms like mist arise ; the Furies flock,
And the halls of Hell are loud where he crieth her name.
And hark, as with thunder shock,
On pillars of flame
The gates of the palace open ; and there by the throne
Of Hades, holy and high, he standeth alone.
[*A pause.*
Sweet is the sound of those strings in the realm of death.
But the heart of Hell is a tomb.
Pour forth thy breath !
Go, utter thy prayer ! In vain, in vain is thy cry ! [*A pause.*
LEADER OF CHORUS. Oh, speak, and tell !
BACCS. For now we behold in thine eye
The stroke of death !
CHORUS. Orpheus ! Must Orpheus die ?
PHALISSA. Death's doors are strong !
O hunger of Hell, be fed !
CHORUS. Mute, mute, in the world of the dead,
Falls the voice of Song !
PHALISSA. A sound of weeping ! And lo, the voices are hushed :
Hell hears, and the night-black hovering wings, that rushed

Hither and thither, have dropt like ebon snow
In shadowy drifts ; on scaly rocks below
Nestled they cluster ; and the Furies' shrieks
Shrink into whispers, for now Hades speaks,
And all Hell trembles. Hearken !

[*Thunder rolls. A pause.*

1ST BACC. Yea ; what saith ?

PHALISSA. 'Thy prayer prevails. Out of this realm of death
Thou shalt pass free : and if thy song can sway—
Thy song alone—back to the eyes of day
The soul thou lovest—even so shall it be.

[*Thunder.*

But look not on her yet ! for if thou see
Her face amid the dead, dead she remains
For ever. But if, hearkening to thy strains,
Faithful she follow, and again see shine
Bright air, and earth—I give her to be thine.
Go hence in peace !' [*Thunder.*] In peace !

CHORUS. O joy that cometh ! O heart that hath found release !

BACCS. O Bacchus, what victim is here ? What vengeance is thine ?
Thy Cup hath been spilled, and the minstrel hath trampled the Vine !

PHALISSA. He goeth : but night is upon him. And where goeth he,
Only a voice can she hear ; and the upward way
Is rugged and long :
Not yet can thine eyes see day—
Not yet, not yet !
And hark how, robbed of their prey,

The Furies cry as they circle, and hover, and throng !
And loud in the caverned way
Is the beat of their wings :
And distant and faint grows the sound of the minstrel's song.
And round her flicker in rings
Red mouths with the fang that stings :
Their coils are a net in the path,
The blast of their breath is flame ;
Hither, thither, with eyes of wrath,
They meet, and part, and point in the gloom ;
And blind is the way beneath her feet,
And the narrow rock becometh a tomb.
But ever a voice that cries her name—
His voice, his voice she hears, in a world of darkness and doom.

BACCS. What does that look forebode ? Alas, what seest thou now ?
A fire hath hold of thy heart : there is wrath on thy brow !

PHALISSA. Upward, and upward yet ! And what if ye come ?—
The God hath his victim still !
For the altar stands, and the priest, and the sacred flame ;
And we that worship his name,
Shall we not do his will ?

[*The harp of* ORPHEUS *is heard faintly from below.*

So come, so come, thou God ! For now I hear
The strain of a song,

And the sound of a minstrel's lyre.
He cometh, he cometh! And there awaiteth him fire,
And worship, and praise in this land.

BACCS. He cometh, he cometh, to bring us our heart's desire.
And the grape lies under his hand!

PHALISSA. See, see now, and hark,
How the baulked Furies beat
And shriek in the rocks for rage!
Above and about her the black wings meet,
The worm of fear is under her feet,
And over her straining eyes the cage
Of night, and the horror of darkness clings.

[*The music of* ORPHEUS *grows louder.*

'Orpheus, where art thou?' Cry, yea cry!
Call him aloud, but he shall not hear!
Oh, where, where now is the voice that sings?
Drown, Furies, drown the sound of those strings!
Cover, beat back the light with your wings,
And come, ye fangs of fire, and take
Hold on that heart, till terror awake,
And cry 'No light, no light can I see!
No light——!'

[*She breaks off in mid-word, and stands gazing. The voice of* EURYDICE *is heard from below.*

EURYDICE. Turn, Orpheus, turn thy face, and look at me!
Look, or I die!

[*Within the cave comes a broken crash of chords. The harp of* ORPHEUS *ceases to*

sound. A distant wail of many voices in lamentation rises from below and dies. PHALISSA *stands fixed, with a face of fierce glee. She makes a slow, downward movement with her hands, descriptive of* EURYDICE'S *descent back into Hell.*

Enter ORPHEUS *from the cave.*

ORPHEUS. Ye vulture beaks of light, pluck out these eyes !
Let them not look again !
Come, come, deep night,
And cover me ; and thou quick Death contain !
Woe ! Woe !
Day cometh in vain !

LEADER OF CHORUS. Alas ! what sorrow is this, which from thy heart
Welleth like water ? Speak, for here is a friend.
Give to me, to me also, to bear a part
Of thy grief, though it have no end !

ORPHEUS. Blind, blind, oh, blind !
O face, I shall see no more !
I turned, and I looked behind,
And it broke like foam by the shore—
Melted like mist—was gone !
Backward, backward they bore
Her away !

CHORUS. Woe, woe ! She cometh no more !

ORPHEUS. Take, oh, take me away !
Out of the light of day

Bury me, deep !
Better, O friend, than to weep,
Reach me a hand and slay !
So shall the voice of my pain
Be heard no more, and the sleep
Of ages fold me again !

CHORUS. Woe, woe ! Ah, whither hath gone
The light of thine eyes that shone,
And that shines no more ?

ORPHEUS. O heart of my Mother Earth,
Receive, give rest to my woe !
Undo the bonds of my birth,
Loose me, and let me go !
For there is darkness below
Without sun-rising or setting ;
And peace for ever, when over the brink
Of Lethe the dead lips stoop to drink,
And out of the mind sharp memories shrink,
And the soul of man finds forgetting !

[PHALISSA, *advancing, presents to* ORPHEUS *the wine cup.*

PHALISSA. Orpheus, from grief I come to set thee free :
The God thou wouldst not worship seeks for thee. [*She offers the cup.*
Dost thou deny him yet ? Wilt thou still spurn
Bacchus, the God ?

ORPHEUS. Eurydice, return !

BACCS. Bacchus, the God ! the Vine !

PHALISSA. His chastening rod
Is on thee now. Drink, and thy light shall shine !

BACCS. Io, Io, Bacchus! Bacchus, Lord of the Vine!

ORPHEUS. Eurydice! Eurydice!

PHALISSA. Shall a shade hearken? None brings back the dead,
Save one. Here in this cup the wine is red.
Drink, and thine eyes shall see!

ORPHEUS. Return, return! O sweet ghost, look on me!
Not with mine eyes, but with my soul I 'll see
Thy face again. Hither, oh, come to me!

PHALISSA. Far hast thou sought her, yet hast failed to find.
But he who seeketh thee now cometh to bind
Thy soul to his—making thy flesh to be
His flesh, thy blood his blood.

ORPHEUS. Eurydice!

BACCS. Io, Bacchus, the God!

PHALISSA. See, where the Vine
Stretcheth its arms! Come, come, for thou art mine!
'Tis the God speaketh to thee; 'tis not I.

BACCS. Bacchus the God!

ORPHEUS. Eurydice!

PHALISSA. This shall men know thee by!
[*She crowns him with vine leaves.*
I am the cup; and thou, and thou the grape.
Now in thy flesh I hold thee past escape:
Mine, henceforth, mine! Hark how a God's voice cries:
'Victim and priest art thou!' Ho, Bacchus, rise!
Smite, for thine hour has come!

[*The* BACCHANALS *rush forward and fall*

upon ORPHEUS, *smiting him with thyrsus and vine-stems. Others with snakes hold the* SHEPHERDS *spellbound. Above the tumult is heard the harping of* ORPHEUS.

BACCS. Io, Bacchus, the Vine! Io, Bacchus, the God!

PHALISSA. Hither, my people, and come!
Gather ye grapes for the feast!
Under your feet let the vintage foam
To Bacchus, victim and priest!

BACCS. Io, Io, Bacchus! Bacchus, Lord of the Vine!
Hark, we cry to thee, Bacchus!
Make this flesh to be thine!
O Bacchus, the God
Of the Vine, and the Blood,
I will smite with thy rod
Till the vat runs red;
With my feet will I tread
Till the streams gush out!

ORPHEUS. Yea, smite, and smite me again!
For the song that I sang was vain.
By the wrath of a God am I slain!

BACCS. Bacchus, Bacchus, the God!

ORPHEUS. Yet hearken, Earth, to my cry!
O Death! O desolate shore!
Oh, rest for man's soul when night draws nigh,
And out of high Heaven the Gods shall die,
And Earth shall know them no more!

BACCS. Bacchus!

[PHALISSA *seizes his harp.* ORPHEUS *falls.*

PHALISSA. Out of the body floweth
The blood of the victim slain.

Bacchus! To death he goeth!
Bacchus! He riseth again!

[*The* BACCHANALS *lift up the body of* ORPHEUS. PHALISSA *raises the harp above her head in triumph. A sound of music comes from the strings; the dead voice of* ORPHEUS *is heard crying in mingled ecstasy and grief.*

VOICE OF ORPHEUS. Eurydice! Eurydice!

[PHALISSA *dashes the harp to ground. The* BACCHANALS *rush out bearing with them the body of* ORPHEUS.

BACCS. Great, great is thy might,
Bacchus, Giver of wine!
Man's heart thou hast crowned with light,
And the draught of thy cup is bright.
Thou rulest the day and the night,
Bacchus, Lord of the Vine.

[*Exeunt* BACCHANALS. *Their song dies away in the distance.* PHILEMON *tears off the strands of vine in which the* BACCHANALS *have bound him, and follows after them.*

The SHEPHERDS *advance toward the place of blood, and cover their faces with their mantles. The* LEADER OF CHORUS *takes up the harp of* ORPHEUS.

LEADER OF CHORUS. Orpheus is dead, is dead!
Orpheus, that with his lute
Tamed savage beasts, soothed the deep cares of men,
And to wild things gave hearts.

Stir not again,
Ye strings, henceforth be mute!
Now is enchantment fled:
The bliss ye breathed, the lips ye loved are dumb.
But, in the dark and evil days to come,
Accept no lesser lord:
Delight once tasted, take as your reward—
Better than any lees of scornful breath
From those that loved him not—this boon of death!
Sweet body, yield up thy soul!

[*He breaks the harp, and covers it with his cloak. As the strings sunder with a sound of wail, the voice of* ORPHEUS *is heard again.*

VOICE OF ORPHEUS. Eurydice!

1ST SEMI-CHORUS. Sweet was thy voice as a bird
Which singeth ere rise of sun;
And sweeter than songs in the noontide heard
Was the song of that one.

2ND SEMI-CHORUS. O Bird, they have taken thy nest;
For the hands of hate were too strong.
Mute, in the maker's breast,
Lies a world of song!

CHORUS. Why, God, why, God, hast thou slain
The sweet singer of earth?
Is there no room in man's dwelling
For music or mirth?
Shall he travel, but come to no goal?
Shall he never be blest
Till he sink in the grave?

Must he cease ere his soul
Find rest ?

During the singing of the Chorus PHILEMON *returns. He stands listless and broken, paying no heed to what goes on around him.*

LEADER OF CHORUS. But thou who didst follow afar, his lover and friend,
Hast thou no word to tell ?

PHILEMON [*speaking very quietly*]. Grief comes to an end
When the body can hold no more. That surely is well.
Naught else have I seen or heard,
And nothing of good can I tell.
Limb from limb they have torn
And strewn as things without worth ;
And down the river his head goes borne
Away to the ends of earth.
And, as it goes, the dead voice crieth
Her name—O name, most sweet to the ear !—
And rock, and hollow, and reed replieth,
And the rushes are stirred, and the river sigheth.
And over the world the sound of it dieth—
Never ! For sweeter than death that word ;
And dear to Earth's heart was the song we heard.

[*Upon the distant hill where now stands the altar, the smoke and flame of sacrifice are seen to rise. The* SHEPHERDS *gaze for awhile, then turn away with eyes blinded by tears, and reach out hand to hand for the clasp of fellowship.*

LEADER OF CHORUS. Reach me a hand, O friend !
And lead me, for I would go
Unto a place apart,
Where the sound of this sighing may end :
To a place unstained by blood
Where the heart of man hath not striven,
Nor evil come like a flood
In wrath, nor the hate of Heaven.

[*Hand in hand, he and* PHILEMON *pass out.*

1ST SEMI-CHORUS. Out of this place of slaughter
So let us go, and have done
With the evil which men have wrought
On earth in the sight of the sun :
For that was the path I sought
Of old ere grief I had known,
Or the bitter breaking of dreams
In a day when no pity was shown.

[*They begin to pass out.*

2ND SEMI-CHORUS. There in some valley of streams
I will dwell (in a place withdrawn
From the ways and worship of Heaven,
From men and their weary wars),
By the murmur of falling water,
And the night-long watch of the stars,
Where the breezes of earth blow sweet
Round the faithful feet of the dawn.

[*Exeunt.*

THE END

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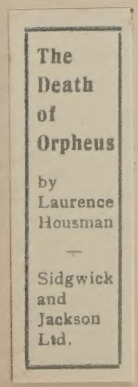
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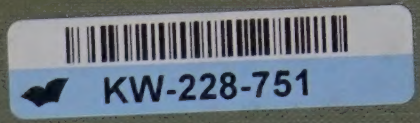
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